

It could not & was not expected to succeed

TECHNOLOGY

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LETTERS

Lack of U.S. military support doomed Bay of Pigs

My father was one of an elite group of U.S. naval pilots chosen to provide air support for the Cuban freedom fighters at the Bay of Pigs in 1961. As a young man, I remember him telling me how he and his fellow officers had planned to assist Cuban exiles trying to retake control of their country from Fidel Castro ("An invasion of bad ideas," News, Monday).

He told me the Navy had openly projected U.S. casualties from the very start and informed all those who would listen that an operation of this sort was not without potential loss of life.

As a result, my father, a veteran of World War II and Korea, was ordered to remove all of his identification and insignia in case he was shot down or captured, so our government could disavow any knowledge of his involvement.

At the very last minute, Robert Kennedy scuttled the whole operation by inexplicably demanding a guarantee of no U.S. casualties, thereby sealing the fate of hundreds of Cuban exiles who were counting on our support.

My father and all of the U.S. military personnel involved were appalled at the needless loss of life and the underhanded political subterfuge that took place.

Clay Caldwell
Western Springs, Ill.

Calling off air strikes

The article regarding the supposed shortcomings of President Kennedy's decision-making during the Bay of Pigs invasion was an example of revisionist journalistic inquiry — incomplete and uninformed at best.

It repeats the tired old if-JFK-had-only-provided-air-cover canard. It also contradicts its own central thesis — that the operation was doomed by Kennedy's tinkering. The article repeatedly mentions government officials and advisers whose advice never reached Kennedy.

But it is the omission of several key facts that raises the most doubts. Nowhere is the role of McGeorge Bundy, JFK's special assistant for national security affairs, examined. Indeed, Bundy is not even mentioned. The fact is that Kennedy had given his final approval to the invasion plan at about 1:45 p.m. on April 16, specifically authorizing the air strike by Nicaraguan-based B-26s to wipe out the three combat-capable aircraft Castro had left after the April 15 bombing raids. The destruction of these three T-33s was critical for the invaders' success. But Bundy inexplicably



1961 file photo by Raul Corrales, Granma, via Canadian Press Photo
Bay of Pigs: Cuban leader Fidel Castro, with glasses and beret, sits in a tank near the Bay of Pigs invasion site. Castro's forces defeated the CIA-led invaders.

placed a call to the CIA some eight hours after Kennedy's go-ahead, canceling the pre-dawn air attack.

The article also omits the fact that for Kennedy to have used U.S. military aircraft to support the invasion would have been a violation of National Security Council policy against operational use of armed forces during peacetime.

In faulting Kennedy for approving the change of the invasion site, the article neglects to mention that the Bay of Pigs was chosen because its airstrip was strategically located. The airfield was difficult to reach from the mainland and would have provided the B-26s ample opportunity to cover the invasion force as Castro's troops tried to reach it. But, of course, the success of the invasion was predicated on the destruction of the T-33s.

These facts and many others regarding the ill-fated Bay of Pigs invasion are all explained in the book *JFK* by Col. L. Fletcher Prouty. While some may question the credibility of one man's version of the events, the fact is that Prouty was the chief of special operations for the Joint Chiefs of Staff during the Kennedy administration and was a true insider well acquainted with many of the principals of this story. I

find it curious that the major news media have continually shunned his accounts of the JFK presidency.

Ultimately, the Bay of Pigs fiasco was a poorly planned and misguided operation thrust upon an inexperienced president who really wanted no part of it.

The American people deserve a full account of their history.

Stephen Rogers
Melville, N.Y.

JFK not that 'great'

Except for some corroborative detail, especially relating to the opinions of some "New Frontiersmen," there's little that's new in your article on JFK's responsibility for the Bay of Pigs fiasco. The substance of his irresponsibility and indecision has been known for years.

What is new is the willingness of a major news medium to suggest that JFK was as weak and as irresponsible as he in fact was.

Far from being a "great" or even a "good" presidency, his tenure went far to obscure issues in the interest of image and to obfuscate responsible reporting.

Donald M. Barnes
Spokane, Wash.